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Adapting University Education in Media and Communication Sciences to the Age of New Media in Algeria: Challenges, Strategies, and Impacts-

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Abstract:

In an era marked by rapid technological advancements and the omnipresence of new media, this research paper delves into the imperative issue of adapting media and communication education in Algeria. This paper explores the challenges, strategies, and implications of aligning educational approaches with the demands of the modern media landscape. Key challenges include bridging the technological divide between urban and rural areas and updating outdated curricula that predominantly emphasize traditional journalism and communication practices. Strategies to address these challenges encompass curriculum reform, faculty development, and industry collaboration, taking into consideration Algeria's unique sociocultural context. This research underscores the significance of reshaping media education in Algeria, not only to equip students with relevant skills but also to enhance civic engagement, media literacy, and the country's global competitiveness in the digital age. This paper provides a comprehensive framework for policymakers and educators to navigate these challenges and embrace the opportunities presented by the age of new media.

Keywords: Media Education; New Media; Curriculum Reform; Digital Literacy

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic landscape of global communication, the advent of new media has ushered in transformative changes, redefining how information is disseminated, consumed, and interacted with. As we stand at the crossroads of tradition and innovation, the need to recalibrate education, particularly in the realm of media and communication, becomes increasingly evident. This presentation delves into the pivotal theme of "Adapting Media and Communication Education to the Age of New Media in Algeria," dissecting the challenges that permeate the current educational framework, unveiling strategic pathways for adaptation, and unravelling the far-reaching implications for the future.

Algeria, a nation with a rich cultural tapestry and a vibrant media landscape, finds itself at the nexus of tradition and modernity. The contours of media and communication education, once defined by conventional practices, now confront a pressing demand for evolution. As we navigate through the intricate web of challenges, strategies, and implications, we embark on a journey to not only understand the unique dynamics at play in Algerian education but also to envision a future where media education aligns seamlessly with the demands of the digital era.

Our exploration begins with a critical examination of the challenges that impede the progress of media and communication education in Algeria. From outdated curricula to technological disparities, these challenges serve as formidable obstacles that necessitate thoughtful consideration and innovative solutions. Beyond acknowledging the hurdles, we will dissect strategic approaches that hold the promise of not only mitigating these challenges but also propelling media education into a realm of relevance and resonance.

Moreover, this presentation will draw upon inspiring case studies and examples, both from global initiatives and local endeavors within Algeria, to illuminate the potential for transformative change. We will envision a future where educators, policymakers, and industry collaborators converge to craft an educational ecosystem that fosters adaptability, creativity, and critical thinking.

In our quest for adaptation, we cannot overlook the profound implications that such changes bear on the broader socio-cultural and economic landscape of Algeria. As we reframe media education, we also reframe the narrative of what it means to communicate and engage in the 21st century. This presentation culminates with a set of recommendations and a call to action, inviting stakeholders to actively participate in the journey toward a more dynamic, responsive, and forward-looking media and communication education in Algeria.

2. Problematic:

In the face of the rapidly evolving landscape of global communication and the pervasive influence of new media, the realm of media and communication education in Algeria stands at a critical juncture. The current educational framework faces multifaceted challenges that impede its efficacy in preparing students for the demands of the digital age. This presentation seeks to unravel the following problematic: How can media and communication education in Algeria adapt to the age of new media?

1- What are the specific challenges faced in adapting the media and communication curriculum in Algeria to the age of new media?

- 2- What are the strategies for adapting media and communication education in Algeria to the age of new media, particularly in terms of curriculum reform?
- 3- What are the potential benefits and risks for students involved in the adaptation of media and communication education to the age of new media in Algeria?

3. Importance of study:

The study on adapting media and communication education to the age of new media in Algeria holds paramount importance for the nation's educational and societal fabric. In an era dominated by rapid technological advancements and global connectivity, aligning educational practices with the evolving nature of media is essential. This study is not merely an academic pursuit; it is a strategic initiative to empower the next generation with the skills and insights needed to navigate and contribute meaningfully to the dynamic media landscape. By addressing the challenges faced by media education in Algeria, this research aims to cultivate a workforce that is not only competitive in the global arena but also deeply rooted in the cultural identity of the nation. The outcomes of this study have the potential to spark transformative changes, fostering economic growth, preserving cultural narratives, and nurturing a population capable of critically engaging with media in ways that contribute to societal progress. Ultimately, the study serves as a compass guiding the trajectory of education, ensuring its relevance, and equipping individuals to thrive in an era defined by the pervasive influence of new media technologies.

4. Challenges in Adapting Media and Communication Education in Algeria to the Age of New Media

Adapting media and communication education in Algeria to the age of new media presents significant challenges, primarily in three key areas: infrastructure and resources, traditional teaching methods, and the evolving media landscape, Language Barriers, Regulatory and Ethical Considerations.

1- Infrastructure and Resources:

Unequal access to technology and internet across the country hinders effective learning and participation. According to Boukhatem (2019), the digital divide in Algeria disproportionately affects rural areas, with only 62.1% of individuals having internet access nationwide (ITU, 2022). This disparity limits students' ability to engage with online resources, collaborate with peers, and develop essential digital skills.

Furthermore, Algerian higher education institutions often struggle with limited funding for technology updates and resources. Benkhedoukha (2021) highlights this issue, emphasizing how budgetary constraints hinder the integration of technology into teaching practices and impede access to necessary hardware and software (Benkhedoukha, 2021, p177).

Finally, educators themselves face challenges in terms of accessing online resources and professional development opportunities. Boughanem and Hammouche (2021) report that only 42% of Algerian teachers feel adequately prepared to integrate technology into their teaching, suggesting a need for increased training and support for educators to effectively navigate the digital landscape (Boughanem and Hammouche, 2021, p11).

2- **Traditional Teaching Methods:**

The transition from traditional theoretical frameworks to hands-on, project-based learning poses a significant challenge for Algerian media and communication education. Benatallah and Hadj-Abdallah (2018) note the prevalence of rote learning and theoretical knowledge in Algerian educational systems, which can hinder the implementation of project-based learning approaches that require critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills (Benatallah and Hadj-Abdallah, 2018, p 115).

Additionally, some educators may resist adopting new technologies and methodologies due to factors such as lack of training, fear of change, or perceived workload increase. This resistance can hinder the overall progress of adapting the curriculum to the needs of the new media landscape.

3- **Evolving Media Landscape:**

The rapid pace of change in media technologies and platforms necessitates continuous curriculum updates to ensure students are equipped with relevant skills and knowledge. Emphasize this challenge in the context of journalism education, highlighting the need to adapt to the rise of social media and mobile news platforms to stay relevant to industry demands (Chalal and Belhadj 2021, p651).

However, educators often lack clear guidelines on how to integrate these new media trends and tools into existing curricula effectively. Boukhatem (2015) calls for the development of clear frameworks and resources to help educators navigate this integration process while ensuring core learning objectives are met (Boukhatem, 2015, p85).

Another challenge lies in keeping pace with the ever-evolving skills and knowledge required in the media and communication industry. Benatallah and Hadj-Abdallah (2018) point out this difficulty, emphasizing the need for strong partnerships with industry professionals and continuous professional development for educators to stay ahead of the curve (Benatallah and Hadj-Abdallah, 2018, p122).

These challenges are complex and require multi-faceted solutions. Addressing the digital divide, investing in technology and resources, providing adequate training for educators, and promoting innovative teaching methods are crucial steps towards successfully adapting media and communication education in Algeria to the age of new media.

4- **Language Barriers:**

Limited availability of new media tools and resources in Arabic presents a significant barrier for some students. This can hinder their access to information, participation in online activities, and development of critical skills necessary for success in the media and communication field. "The lack of Arabic-language resources and software can create a significant disadvantage for students who are not proficient in English or other dominant languages in the field" (Boukhatem 2015 p 92).

Addressing this challenge requires a multi-pronged approach:

- Developing Arabic-language resources and software: This could involve initiatives like translating existing tools, creating new Arabic-specific platforms, and encouraging local developers to focus on language localization.

- Promoting bilingual learning: Encouraging students to develop proficiency in both Arabic and other relevant languages, like English, can provide them with wider access to resources and opportunities.
- Utilizing alternative learning methods: Creative approaches, like visual storytelling and multimedia content, can help bridge the language gap and make information accessible to students who may struggle with written text. (El-Oifi, Jemini, 2019)

5- **Regulatory and Ethical Considerations:**

The complex and evolving legal and ethical landscape surrounding new media poses challenges for both educators and students. Lack of clear guidelines and regulations regarding online activities can create confusion and uncertainty. Additionally, issues like data privacy, misinformation, and cyberbullying need to be addressed to ensure students are equipped to navigate the online world safely and responsibly.

Addressing this challenge involves:

- Developing clear legal frameworks: Establishing clear laws and regulations governing online activities, including data protection, intellectual property rights, and online content restrictions, can provide a necessary foundation for responsible online behavior.
- Incorporating ethical education into the curriculum: Integrating modules on digital citizenship, online safety, and critical thinking skills can help students develop a strong ethical compass and make informed decisions in the online environment.
- Promoting dialogue and collaboration: Fostering open communication and collaboration among educators, students, industry professionals, and policymakers can contribute to developing effective solutions to emerging ethical challenges in the new media landscape.

5. **Strategies for Adapting Media and Communication Education to the Age of New Media in Algerian Universities.**

Adapting media and communication education in Algerian universities to the age of new media presents both challenges and opportunities. To navigate this landscape effectively, universities can implement a range of strategies across three key areas: curriculum reform, resource allocation, and building a supportive environment.

a. **Curriculum Reform:**

• **Integration of New Media Technologies and Tools:**

- Utilize platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube for simulated campaigns in social media courses (Chalal & Belhadj, 2021, p 655).
- Integrate data visualization software like Tableau for storytelling in data-driven journalism courses.
- Develop courses specifically focused on new media tools and platforms, such as "Social Media for Communication Campaigns" or "Mobile App Development for Journalists."

- **Focus on Critical Thinking and Digital Literacy:**
 - Design modules on fact-checking in the digital age, evaluating online sources, and responsible online behavior (Boukhatem & Hammouche, 2021, p 16).
 - Teach students to critically analyze information, identify biases, and verify news sources before sharing.
 - Foster research skills through projects that require students to utilize online databases and digital tools for data collection and analysis.
- **Project-Based Learning:**
 - Encourage students to develop online news platforms simulating real-world newsrooms (Chalal & Belhadj, 2021, p 659).
 - Create projects where students design social media campaigns for local businesses or community initiatives.
 - Develop mobile apps addressing social issues or providing information relevant to Algerian communities.
- **Partnerships with Media Organizations and Industry Professionals:**
 - Collaborate with journalists, media companies, and digital marketing experts for guest lectures, internships, and industry-focused projects (Boughanem & Hammouche, 2021, p18).
 - Invite professionals to provide feedback on student projects and offer career guidance.
 - Establish partnerships for mentorship programs connecting students with industry professionals.
- **Faculty Development:**
 - Organize workshops and training programs on using new media tools, teaching critical thinking skills, and incorporating project-based learning (Benkhedoukha, 2021, p 184).
 - Encourage faculty to attend conferences and workshops related to new media and media education.
 - Provide incentives and support for faculty research and development initiatives focused on integrating new media into their courses.
- b. **Resource Allocation:**
 - **Addressing the Digital Divide:**
 - Establish computer labs in underserved areas and offer loan programs for devices to ensure equitable access to technology (Boukhatem, 2019, p 196).
 - Partner with internet providers to offer affordable student plans and expand internet access in university communities.
 - Develop offline learning materials and resources for students who may not have consistent internet access.
 - **Investing in Technology Infrastructure:**
 - Allocate resources for hardware and software upgrades to ensure reliable access to necessary tools and platforms (Chalal & Belhadj, 2021, p 659).
 - Invest in high-speed internet connections and establish adequate technical support services for students and faculty.
 - Explore cloud-based solutions and open-source software to reduce reliance on expensive licenses and ensure sustainability.

- **Developing Open-Source Resources:**

- Motivate faculty to create and share open-source learning materials and tools, such as online tutorials, case studies, and project templates (Benkhedoukha, 2021, p186).
- Establish a digital repository within the University for sharing open-source resources among faculty and students.
- Partner with other universities and educational institutions to share and collaborate on open-source resources for media and communication education.

- **Seeking Funding Opportunities:**

- Research grants, partnerships with private companies, and collaborations with international organizations can provide additional funding for technology upgrades, resource development, and faculty development initiatives (Boukhatem, 2015, p98).
- Explore opportunities for crowd funding campaigns to support specific projects or initiatives related to adapting media and communication education.
- Advocate for increased government funding and investments in higher education to support the integration of new media technologies and practices.

- c. **Building a Supportive Environment:**

- **Faculty Collaboration and Knowledge Sharing:**

- Establish platforms and forums: Create online or physical spaces where faculty can share best practices, challenges, and solutions for integrating new media into their courses (Benkhedoukha, A., 2021). Examples include online discussion boards, dedicated faculty development workshops, or peer-mentoring programs.
- Foster peer-to-peer learning: Encourage faculty to present their experiences and insights with colleagues through seminars, workshops, or presentations at conferences (Benatallah, A., & Hadj-Abdallah, H, 2018). This fosters a collaborative learning environment and allows faculty to learn from each other's successes and challenges.
- Develop a shared repository: Create a central repository for storing and accessing open-source learning materials, lesson plans, and project ideas related to new media integration (Chalal, F., & Belhadj, A, 2021). This allows faculty to easily share resources and avoid duplicate efforts.

6. Potential Benefits and Risks for Students in Adapting Media and Communication Education to New Media in Algeria:

1- Potential Benefits:

- **Enhanced employability skills:** Integrating new media tools and practices into education equips students with skills highly sought-after in the media and communication industry, such as social media management, digital marketing, online storytelling, and data visualization (Boukhatem & Hammouche, 2021).

- **Improved critical thinking and digital literacy:** New media education emphasizes critical analysis of information, source evaluation, and responsible online behavior, crucial skills for navigating the complex digital landscape (Chalal & Belhadj, 2021).
- **Increased creativity and innovation:** Exploring new media tools and platforms encourages students to experiment, think outside the box, and develop innovative approaches to communication and storytelling (Benkhedoukha, 2021).
- **Enhanced collaboration and communication skills:** Project-based learning and online collaboration tools foster teamwork, communication with diverse audiences, and effective online communication skills (Benatallah & Hadj-Abdallah, 2018).
- **Improved access to information and resources:** New media platforms provide students with diverse learning materials, access to global networks, and opportunities for online communities and peer-to-peer learning (Boukhatem, 2015).
- **Development of a global perspective:** Engaging with international media and online communities broadens students' horizons, fosters intercultural understanding, and prepares them for a globalized media landscape.

2- **Potential Risks:**

- **Digital divide and unequal access:** Students with limited internet access or technology resources may face disadvantage and struggle to keep up with their peers in a new media-focused curriculum (Chalal & Belhadj, 2021).
- **Information overload and misinformation:** The abundance of information online can be overwhelming and lead to difficulty in discerning reliable sources and identifying misinformation (Boukhatem & Hammouche, 2021).
- **Cyberbullying and online harassment:** Increased online activity exposes students to potential risks like cyberbullying, online harassment, and privacy concerns (Benatallah & Hadj-Abdallah, 2018).
- **Technostress and mental health:** Excessive screen time and pressure to keep up with the latest trends can lead to technostress, anxiety, and negative impacts on mental health (Benkhedoukha, 2021).
- **Ethical challenges and responsible online behavior:** Navigating new media platforms requires awareness of ethical considerations like copyright, data privacy, and responsible online discourse (Boukhatem, 2015).
- **Inadequate preparation of educators:** Educators may lack the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively integrate new media into their teaching, leading to frustration and hindering the learning process (Chalal & Belhadj, 2021).

7. **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the examination of adapting media and communication education to the age of new media in Algeria reveals itself as an imperative endeavor with profound implications for the nation's future. Through a comprehensive analysis of challenges, strategies, and implications, this study has shed light on the pressing need to reorient educational

frameworks to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving digital landscape. The importance of this study lies in its potential to revolutionize how knowledge is imparted, ensuring that students are not only technologically proficient but also culturally attuned, fostering a unique identity within the global media milieu.

By addressing curricular obsolescence, technological disparities, and fostering collaboration with industry professionals, this study charts a course toward a more relevant and responsive media education system. The outcomes of this research extend beyond the classroom, influencing economic development, cultural preservation, and societal awareness. The study underscores the significance of empowering future generations with the critical skills necessary to navigate, innovate, and contribute meaningfully to the complex tapestry of modern media.

As Algeria strives to position itself competitively on the global stage, this study serves as a blueprint for educational transformation, recognizing that an adaptable and forward-thinking media education system is not just a conduit for knowledge but a catalyst for progress. In essence, this research advocates for a paradigm shift—one that embraces the opportunities presented by new media, integrates cultural nuances, and prepares individuals to become active contributors to a dynamic and interconnected world. In doing so, this study contributes to the ongoing dialogue on the role of education in shaping the future of Algeria's media landscape and, by extension, the broader socio-cultural and economic fabric of the nation.

8. Recommendations:

- Revise the media and communication curriculum to include modules on digital literacy, data analytics, and content creation, ensuring alignment with industry needs.
- Implement ongoing professional development programs for educators to stay updated on new media technologies and pedagogical strategies.
- Invest in improving technological infrastructure to provide equal access to digital tools and resources across urban and rural areas.
- Foster partnerships between educational institutions and the media industry, facilitating internships, guest lectures, and collaborative projects for students.
- Integrate cultural considerations into the curriculum to preserve and express Algeria's cultural identity in the digital space.
- Encourage active student involvement through interactive and participatory elements in the curriculum, promoting enthusiasm for media education.
- Establish research and innovation hubs within educational institutions to explore cutting-edge technologies and incubate innovative ideas.
- Advocate for government support, securing funding for technological infrastructure, research initiatives, and professional development programs.
- Conduct benchmarking studies on global best practices in media education and adapt successful models to the Algerian context.
- Implement a system of continuous evaluation, regularly assessing the effectiveness of the curriculum, teaching methods, and industry collaborations for ongoing relevance.

- In order to adapt media training to the digital age, media production companies must be flexible, innovative, and prepared to adapt to evolving technologies and audience preferences. They also need to embrace digital platforms, explore new revenue models, prioritize data privacy and ethics, and provide high-quality, relevant content. Relevance in a crowded digital landscape.

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